

Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area: Timeline of Events

1. 1990: Lower Umatilla Basin is declared a Groundwater Management Area because regional nitrate-nitrogen concentrations exceeded 7mg/L. The area includes parts of Morrow and Umatilla counties. A 4-year interagency hydrogeological investigation to determine the extent of the contamination and to identify potential sources begins.
2. June 1990 – March 1993: Per the 1995 Umatilla Hydrology Report, authored by Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Water Resources Department, and Oregon Health Division, state agencies collected nearly 850 groundwater samples from 252 sites in LUB.
 - a. 30% contained nitrate concentration exceeding 10 mg/L and 44% were between 2 and 10 mg/L.
3. December 1997: Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area Action Plan is created.
 - a. The plan suggests, but does not mandate, practices to abate nitrate contamination.
 - b. Plan memorialized mitigation goals, recommendations, and strategies, but remained voluntary and provided no funding.
4. January 2019: Second Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area Action Plan final draft for public comment is created. The plan states on page 43:
 - a. 48% of 255 wells recently tested exceed 10 mg/L nitrate drinking water standard, and 60% exceeded the GWMA trigger level of 7 mg/L.
5. January 16, 2020: Food & Water Watch and 8 other petitioners ask EPA to take action pursuant to SDWA 1431 in response to nitrates in drinking water in the LUBGWMA (eastern Oregon), citing lack of progress since the GWMA began in 1990.
6. January 29, 2020: R10 RA provided initial response acknowledging receipt and indicating that EPA would respond further when we have completed our review.
7. February 26, 2020: Initial reviews complete, including contacts with ODA, OHA, and ODEQ (primary state regulators) & consultations with OECA & OGC.
8. February 27, 2020: Region 10 briefs their ECAD director to “inform, receive feedback & obtain decision to proceed with recommendations”
9. May 7, 2020: Region 10 briefs their ECAD director again about the LUB GWMA with a draft letter to send several Oregon state agencies regarding potential next steps in this matter
10. May 28, 2020: WED briefs Susan Bodine at OCE weekly regarding the LUB GWMA situation
11. June 4, 2020: Region 10 is scheduled to provide an informational briefing to Dave Ross and Anna Wildeman on the LUB GWMA.